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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was sent to 100 superintendents to find out how they viewed the preparation of the recent graduates of the University of Maine at Orono hired for teaching positions within their districts. The superintendents were asked to rate the graduates and to list the competencies that were strong points as well as weak points in their performance. Suggestions for improving the preservice teacher education program were also sought. Results showed that the graduates were considered above average in their competency in subject matter, their attitude and interest in teaching, their rapport with students, and their personality characteristics. The lowest ratings were in the areas of classroom management, teaching methods, and pupil evaluation skills. Recommendations for improvement of the program centered around the following-- basic skills instruction, experience with children, teaching methods and techniques, and professional orientation and awareness. Examples of the questions asked of supervisors are appended and tables are included. (DS)

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SUPERINTENDENTS' VIEW OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT ORONO

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The purpose of this study was to find out how superintendents viewed the preparation of the recent graduates of the University of Maine at Orono hired for teaching positions within their districts. The superintendents were asked to rate the graduates and to list the competencies that were strong points as well as weak points in their performance. Suggestions for improving the preservice teacher education program were also sought.

This study was the second phase of the planned program for the evaluation of the preservice teacher education component. The first phase was a survey of the 1970-76 graduates of the College of Education (ERIC Document Ed 141 306).

PROCEDURE

A questionnaire was mailed to 100 superintendents within the state. The list was taken from the state directory. All superintendents in Penobscot, Hancock or Piscatiquis counties received the survey and approximately two-thirds random sample of the remaining superintendents were selected. The form was sent out the spring session of the 1976-77 school year. A cover letter requesting their participation and a stamped addressed envelop were also included.

THE INSTRUMENT

The instrument consisted of twenty-five items. Six were demographic type of questions. A 15 item rating scale, and three open ended items were also included. A copy of the instrument is included in appendix A of the report. The form was mimeographed on the front and back of one sheet of paper.

THE RESULTS

Forty-nine (49%) superintendents responded to the survey. The responses were anonymous. No follow-up letters were mailed to the non-respondents.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS HIRED LAST YEAR

The superintendents responding hired anywhere from zero to 21 teachers. The mean number of teachers hired was 8.1, the median 6.2 and the mode 5.0.

PROPORTION OF UMO GRADUATES HIRED

About one-third of the superintendents reported only 1 to 5% of those hired were UMO graduates. One quarter (25%) reported hiring over 50% UMO graduates. The mean percentage was approximately 20%, while the median percentage was 25%.

RATING OF UMO GRADUATES

The superintendents were first asked to compare UMO graduates to those from other schools. One quarter of the superintendents felt that UMO graduates were somewhat better prepared than other schools. Two-thirds reported that UMO graduates were the same quality as other schools and only 6.1% reported that UMO graduates were somewhat poorer prepared than those from other schools.

They were also asked to rate the graduates on a fifteen item rating scale used by the UMO faculty members to rate the student teachers. A five point scale was used, one equal to "poor" and five equal to "excellent" with three being "average." A profile of the ratings is depicted in Figure 1. The descriptive statistics for the fifteen items are presented in Table 1.

	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5
Competency in subject matter	1	2	3	x (4)	5
Social skills	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Communication skills	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Classroom management	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Promoting mental health	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Attitude, interest in teaching	1	2	3	x (4)	5
Encourage student thinking	1	2	3 x	(4)	5
Encourage student interest	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Teaching methods	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Rapport with students	1	2	3 x	(4)	5
Pupil evaluation skills	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Knowledge of child development	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Ability to accept criticism	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Personal traits	1	2	(3) x	4	5
Professional activities	1	2	(3) x	4	5

Figure 1

Profile of Dimensions of Teaching of
UMO Graduates by Superintendents

(O)–(O) mode

X–X median

Table 1

SUMMARY OF PROFILE OF DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING
OF UMO GRADUATES BY SUPERINTENDENTS

Item	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation	Median	Range
Competency in Subject Matter being Taught	3.77	4.00	0.62	3.83	2 - 5
Social skills	3.28	3.00	0.70	3.27	2 - 4
Communication skills	3.34	3.00	0.56	3.30	2 - 4
Classroom Management	3.08	3.00	0.83	3.09	1 - 5
Promoting Mental Health	3.30	3.00	0.82	3.28	2 - 5
Attitude and Interest in Teaching	3.79	4.00	0.84	3.84	2 - 5
Ability to encourage Student to Think	3.38	4.00	0.67	3.47	2 - 4
Ability to Increase Student Interest	3.24	3.00	0.63	3.21	1 - 4
Teaching Methods and Techniques	3.18	3.00	0.83	3.22	1 - 5
Rapport with Students	3.57	4.00	0.67	3.60	2 - 5
Pupil Evaluation Skills	3.20	3.00	0.64	3.18	2 - 4
Understanding Human Differences and Development	3.30	3.00	0.68	3.28	2 - 5
Ability to Accept Criticism	3.40	3.00	0.67	3.30	2 - 5
Temperament, Adjustment	3.51	3.00	0.76	3.43	2 - 5
Professional Activities	3.24	3.00	0.83	3.22	2 - 5

The beginning teachers are viewed as being strongest in their attitude and interest in teaching, their competency in the subject matter taught, their ability to establish rapport with students, their temperament and adjustment and their ability to encourage students to think and problem solve. Their three weakest areas were classroom management skills, knowledge of teaching methods and techniques and pupil evaluation skills.

STRONGEST COMPETENCIES

The superintendents were asked to list the two strongest competencies observed in recent UMO graduates. The responses are categorized in Table 2 in terms of the rank order of occurance. The list of actual comments are included in Appendix B.

The most frequently mentioned competency was the attitude, interest and enthusiasm that the graduates had toward teaching. The second was their knowledge of the subject matter and the curriculum. The third was the general academic background of the graduates. Personal traits deemed necessary for successful teaching such as having self-confidence, being open and flexible, etc. were listed forth: discipline was listed by only one superintendent and communication skills by two.

WEAKEST COMPETENCIES

The superintendents were asked to list the two weakest competencies observed in recent UMO graduates. The responses are categorized in Table 3 in terms of the rank order of their occurance. The list of actual comments are included in Appendix C. The graduates lack of knowledge of teaching methods and techniques were most frequently mentioned as weaknesses by the superintendents of the graduates. Next in order, tied for second place, were classroom management and understanding human development and individual differences.

TABLE 2

STRONGEST COMPETENCIES OF UMO GRADUATES
AS VIEWED BY SUPERINTENDENTS

Competency	Rank	Frequency
Attitude, interest, enthusiasm	1	21
Knowledge of subject matter and curriculum	2	18
General academic background	3	13
Personal characteristics (self-confidence, openness, flexibility, cooperativeness)	4	7
Knowledge of teaching techniques	5	6
Understanding of students	6	5
Rapport with students	7.5	3
Knowledge of Maine/local districts	7.5	3
Communication skills	9	2
Discipline	10	1

In the sets of competencies, only one category dealt with personal characteristics. Tied for fifth with knowledge of curriculum development and organization and having practical experience, were the personality characteristics such as dedication, appearance and ability to accept criticism. Some competencies were mentioned only once or twice such as knowledge of educational philosophies, how schools operate, legal aspects of education, professional ethics and communication skills.

TABLE 3

WEAKEST COMPETENCIES OF UMO GRADUATES
AS VIEWED BY SUPERINTENDENTS

Competency	Rank	Frequency
Teaching methods/lesson planning	1	10
Classroom management/discipline	2.5	8
Understanding human development and differences	2.5	8
Curriculum development/organization	5	4
Practical experience	5	4
Personal traits (dedication, ability to accept criticism)	5	4
Pupil evaluation skills	7	3
Communication skills	8.5	2
Professional ethics	8.5	2
Legal aspects	11	1
School operations	11	1
Educational philosophy	11	1

SUGGESTED CHANGES FOR THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Thirty-eight of the 49 respondents listed changes they would suggest in the teacher education program. The verbatum responses are included in Appendix D. Four basic themes appear to arise. The first was that more emphasis should be placed upon basic skills instruction--the teachers should have more extensive preparation in the teaching of reading and writing skills. This would also include a knowledge of diagnostic and prescriptive procedures. The second was that the graduates need more experience with children through a

combination of different types of activities. More clinical experiences were seen needed outside of student teaching. Many superintendents felt that the student teaching experience needed to be extended. The third theme related to teaching methods and techniques. They perceived that techniques and methods needed to be based upon the objectives of the system as well as the types of students being taught. They recommended that more stress needed to be placed upon classroom management and discipline. Competency based teacher education programs were suggested. The fourth was the area of professional orientation and awareness.

SUMMARY

The majority of superintendents tend to view the graduates as well prepared as graduates from other teacher training institutions. The graduates were rated above average in their competency in subject matter, their attitude and interest in teaching, their rapport with students and their personality characteristics. It is interesting to note that the objective ratings correspond with the written list of strong and weak competencies listed by the superintendents. The four most frequently mentioned types of strong competencies were attitude, interest and enthusiasm of the graduates toward teaching, their knowledge of the subject matter, their academic preparation and their personality characteristics. The lowest ratings by the superintendents were to classroom management, teaching methods and techniques and pupil evaluation skills. These correspond to the competencies the superintendents as weak areas in the open ended question. Overall, on the specific teaching techniques the graduates were rated average. Very few of the superintendents rated any of the graduates exceptional.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The list of weak competencies as listed by the superintendents should be compared with those listed by the recent graduates and the validity checked through the monitoring of the recent graduates who secure teaching positions, as outlined in phase three of the UMO evaluation plan.
2. If the enrollment is to become more limited in the college, traits and characteristics deemed important by the superintendents should be considered as criteria for the selection process, such as:
   A) good general academic preparation
   B) good communication skills (written and oral)
   C) personal traits such as openness, flexibility, dependability, enthusiasm, self-confidence, etc.
3. Consideration should be given to establishing a more experimental undergraduate teacher education program which would include:
   a) competency based modules and courses. The use of microteaching, video taping, etc.
   b) more clinical experience in a variety of settings.
   c) small group, independent and large group experiences
   d) more emphasis in basic skill instruction - especially reading, writing and mathematics
   e) more emphasis on learning styles, diagnostic and prescriptive testing; pupil evaluation in techniques growth
   f) greater emphasis on child development, human learning
   g) continued program of career awareness and guidance.
4. The report should be used as one source of information by the faculty in the preservice areas for the preparation of teachers and the implications for curriculum revision and development considered.

APPENDIX A

EMPLOYER FORM

1. Current Position_____

2. Number of Teachers in System_____. 3. Approximate number of students in system_____. 4. Location of system in state: ____southern,____northern, ____western, ____eastern

5. How many new teachers have been hired on your professional staff this year? _____ Last year? _____

6. What proportion were University of Maine at Orono Graduates?
____0 to 5%, ____6 to 10%, ____11 to 15%, ____16 to 20%, ____21 to 25%, ____25 to 50%, ____51 or more, ____have no idea

7. How would you compare the preparation of UMO graduates in teaching to those of other schools?
____Very much poorer than other schools
____Somewhat poorer than other schools
____The same quality as other schools
____Somewhat better than other schools
____Much better than other schools

8. What have been the two strongest competencies observed in recent UMO teaching graduates hired on your staff?
A._____ B._____

9. What have been the two weakest competencies observed in recent UMO teaching graduates hired on your staff?
A._____ B._____

How would you rate the recent UMO Graduates you have hired on your staff on the following dimensions?

	DIMENSIONS	RATING				
		Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
10.	Competency in the subject matter being taught	1	23	456	78	9
11.	Social Skills	1	23	456	78	9
12.	Communication Skills	1	23	456	78	9
13.	Classroom management	1	23	456	78	9
14.	Promoting mental health/ positive self-concept of students	1	23	456	78	9
15.	Attitude and interest in teaching	1	23	456	78	9

(Turn over to back of sheet)

APPENDIX B

QUESTION #9

What have been the two weakest competencies observed in recent UMO teaching graduates hired on your staff?

(One teacher) No discipline Little effort to enliven classes

In tune with teenagers Classroom discipline

Too worldly (at times) therefore can't accept criticism

Need more student teaching Elem. teachers need added reading background

Ability to handle routine matters Performance objectives

Teaching methods working with children

Secondary -- functional subject matter

Professional ethics Exposure to curriculum development

None observed

Disciplinary procedures for dealing with pupils

Entry level competencies (i.e., exp. Knowledge and educational philosophies

Not enough reading courses

Multigroup situations record keeping - register and pupil records

Lack of organizational skills

Poor understanding of youth

Lesson planning (long range) Correlation with other subject matter

Lack of classroom management techniques Inability to effectively develop lesson plans

Methods

Classroom management Lack of practical experience

Knowledge of school operations Knowledge of legal concepts

Writing skills

Discipline Appearance

Classroom management Ability to accept criticism

Communication skills Pupil evaluation skills

Internal organization planning Ability to meet individual differences

Limited courses in reading

Ability to work with students Ability to ascertain readiness

Reading methods in elem. teachers Dedication to work

Lack of methods Lack of on-the-job experience

Child psychology patterns Reading language arts skills/abilities to teach

Methods psychology

Methods

APPENDIX C

Question #8

What have been the two strongest competencies observed in recent teaching graduates hired on your staff?

Well grounded in area Personable in dealing with students
(One teacher) lacked professionalism; others were highly professional

Knowledge of subject matter

Subject matter "Maine" orientation

Worldly Rapport

Academic background Practice Teaching experience Poise & confidence

Organization Knowledge of area

Attitude Cooperation

Subject matter - elementary Flexibility

Understanding of students Academic background

Open to diverse philosophies Content of curriculum

Subject matter Business like. Want to really teach

Academic preparation Methodology

Affect awareness Enthusiasm

Better prepared because of having been exposed to education through volunteer programs Much more sensitive to students needs

Knowledge of subject matter

Firm discipline Knowledge of subject matter

Communication Curriculum background

Academic ability Professionalism

Competency in subject matter being taught Attitude and interest in teaching

Subject matter understanding

Attitude Skills

Attitude Scholastic preparation

Communication skills Good academic background

Academic areas

Knowledge of subject field General intellectual ability and background

Interest in children Reading instruction

Understanding of children Willingness to work

Planning Organization

Knowledge of subject matter Attitude

Knowledge of subject matter Attitude and interest in teaching

Enthusiasm Planning and organization

Willingness to work Adaptable

Enthusiasm Training

Speech Therapy Understanding of local society

Good general knowledge Rapport with students

Very willing to put in time planning

Knowledge of basic subject

Self confidence Science, math, music

Determination Attitude

Good command of subject Willingness to learn on the job; positive attitudes

Dedication

APPENDIX D

Question #25

Longer student teaching. More in depth knowledge of educational philosophy and programs.

18 weeks of student teaching
Training in record keeping
Observations in school - opening days and closing days
Include a child development course as a requirement that would give the teacher insight into developmental skills that are necessary prior to academic skill development. Example: visual tracking must be accomplished before reading proficiency can be developed. Gross motor and fine motor development prior to competency in writing, etc.

One full year of student teaching

More training in diagnostic testing and interpretation. Training in animal behavior as it relates to humans

Limit the number of students in the College of Education to a number which might have some reasonable chance of obtaining a job after graduation. This would also allow the College of Education an opportunity to select those applicants which would develop into the strongest educators.

Subject matter understanding is of little value unless they know how to present it and make it somewhat interesting. Most of the secondary teachers teach like college teachers - namely to the big group with little provision for individual differences.

I feel the training period is the key. Obviously the critic teacher must be a strong teacher or the student is short changed. Secondary teachers are not trained to teach pupils in our present arrangement of things-they are trained to teach subjects. No wonder we are having basic competency problems in education. UMO is as good as any school but graduates in teacher placement can be judged only by how good their training panned out hence 8, 9, and 10 are not relevant to me.

Planning based on long range objective in students major subject area. Entirely too many teachers cannot relate to a student or other person why the subject should be taught and how it contributes to a students total formal school experience.

I am very concerned about the student teacher placements and the lack of quality control in teacher-supervisor "matchups". There doesn't seem to be the cohesiveness and coordination between student, supervisors and faculty (UMO) advisors. Students do not seem to have sufficient exposure to a variety of teaching techniques and planning methodology. There also seems to be a deficiency in the development of pupil control techniques. The students are bright and we can be selective therefore we're getting the best available from each institution.

Attitude regarding pupil-teacher relationship. Teacher relies too much on Buddy-Buddy system.

Add to staff educational practitioners as you do on the graduate level. The staff at Maine does not have a hands-on outlook. Keep present staff on methods and content. Add courses on school operations, procedures, etc. so that we do not have to operate an extensive training session. If you look at a recent school law book you'll note a large extension of laws - each of these in one way or another has altered school operations.

I would highly recommend that the university not lessen its standards regarding appearance and professional manner of students. We have noted that those who possess a strong professional manner maintain positive, healthy discipline and respect, and are able to provide children with a much higher quality program than those who try to be just buddies and come down to the students' level. This leaves the student with nothing to admire or strive to imitate. Manner of dressing, speaking, dealing with other adults as well as children are all subtle teaching tools, and provide students with someone to whom they may look up, a feature which modern society seems to have deprived them of in recent times. Thank you!

More training in the specific techniques of student management and classroom control.

Earlier field experience. Would welcome more interns in South Paris

Get all the contact with public schools they can

Better preparation in planning, writing objectives, methodology

Longer student teaching experience

Working on Secondary Program to prepare students for where they are going - e.g., 2 or 3 courses on grammar teaching, composition writing, language arts teaching in the secondary schools, map reading teaching, skills in teaching geography in a meaningful way, core curriculum coordination, and many others - the secondary program is too liberal arts oriented and not preparing the teacher to teach. Secondary practice teachers should have mandatory 16 weeks practice teaching - 8 at Jr. High, 8 at Secondary or 16 at one or the other and also an 8 week teacher aide exp. in their Jr. year. <u>They are just not ready</u>. Don't touch Elem. Program - it is SUPER!

Offer a course in Professional Ethics. Evaluate the development of all activities of the MTA and determine their values as related to the profession of education (Teacher Awareness)

Longer student teaching session. Ideally, one semester Jr. year and one semester Sr. year

Outreach pre-service programs which would expand the students thinking about educational programs and job opportunities which exist north of Bangor. Generally speaking, Orono graduates do not express a preference for job opportunities in all sections of the state. Why?

Require all students to take at least two courses in reading. More emphasis on teaching students as individuals.

We look through a lot of people to find a few very good teachers. I feel we have picked some outstanding teachers but we interviewed a lot of very poor candidates. I don't believe these people should be allowed to enter the profession with a degree. Tighten up entrance and standards for your students. Encourage your students to think that Aroostook is not the end of the world - only half way.

I would suggest that new teachers should receive some information about negotiated contracts and agreements between school committees and teacher associations. They appear to be very naive in this area.

Strong emphasis upon the development of elementary and high school writing skills.
More diagnostic testing training and the application of those test results.
High school English teachers to have better background in reading.

More reading courses for K-8 teachers at least one reading course for all 9-12 teachers

I know nothing about training teachers. From that frame of reference, John Grady's 5-4 plan may have considerable merit.

Each teacher should be fully prepared to teach reading and the related skills in any subject area. Teachers are coming out so specialized they do not emphasize basic language skills in their courses - no wonder kids are not prepared. How many student teachers are truly prepared to speak and write well? If not - how can they then be expected to teach these skills to kids.

Prepare specialists rather than broad teacher training
Perhaps teacher education only on graduate level at Orono with exception of high school specialists
Mandate that each student take courses in, and show skills in, readiness and guidance areas

Much more experience in school setting. Real urge for working with children. Less push for personal well-being. More concern for basic education.

Give more students the opportunity for internships - I would like to see the new teachers with at least half a year of practice teaching

Stress knowledge of the psychology of the children ref. child development patterns and expectations. Teach pedagogical skills and management skills. These can be taught and learned! These should not come by trial and error, over a 2 or 3 year experience, with resulting bad teaching to children.

Greater emphasis placed on student teaching, clinical experiences, and independent studies dealing with children directly.

Secondary teachers have a tendency to "present material" rather than teach children. It seems difficult for them to accept that all students are not totally prepared to work with great independence and responsibility. Prospective candidates need to know "how" to teach.